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SUBSTANTIVE THEME: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Statement submitted by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Help Age International, International Alliance of Women - Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, Zonta International (category I); All-India Women's Conference, Associated Country Women of the World, Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), Foundation for the Rights of the Family (PRODEFA), International Catholic Child Bureau, International Confederation of Christian Family Movement, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council on the Management of Population Programmes, International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), International Federation of Social Workers, International Kolping Society, Italian Centre of Solidarity, Medical Women's International Association, New Humanity, Pax Romana (International Catholic Movement for International and Cultural Affairs) (International Movement of Catholic Students), SOS-Kinderdorf International, World Federation of Methodist Women (WFMW), World Leisure and Recreation Association, World Movement of Mothers, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (category II); European Union of Women, International Association of Charities, International Inner Wheel, International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling (IRTAC), World Peace Council (roster)

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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 29 and 30 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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1. The above-mentioned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, all members of the Vienna Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on the Family,

Recalling that the World Population Conference (Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974) deplored the fact that a considerable portion of the world's population was living in regions of precarious food supply, that hundred of millions of its inhabitants were undernourished and that millions were faced with possible starvation,

Also recalling that, at the International Conference on Population (Mexico City, 6-14 August 1984), the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) reported that women and children constituted the majority of the approximately one billion persons who were lacking adequate shelter and living in extremely unhealthy and unsanitary conditions in neglected rural areas and urban slums,

Stressing that 20 years after the first and 10 years after the second international population conference, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development declared in its preamble that the developing countries were still facing serious economic difficulties, and the number of people living in absolute poverty had increased in many countries,

Encouraged, however, by the decision taken by world leaders at the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995) to launch a global drive for social progress and development embodied in 10 commitments, the main target being to eradicate poverty in the world through decisive national actions and international cooperation as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind (Commitment 2),

Also encouraged by the support to the family implicit in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, which, among the urgent measures envisaged for the eradication of poverty (chapter II), mentions the need for policies that strengthen the family and contribute to its stability in accordance with the principles, goals and commitments contained in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,

Emphasizing that the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development affirms that the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened and should receive comprehensive protection and support, and that in chapter V, "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure", in connection with measures on behalf of families, such as increasing the earning powers of adult members of economically deprived families, the Programme of Action mentions the need to ensure that all social

and economic development policies are fully responsive to the diverse and changing needs and to the rights of families and their individual members, and provide the necessary support and protection, particularly to the most vulnerable families and most vulnerable family members,

Concerned by the undeniable fact that, although in many cases the family can provide a buffer against short-term poverty, due to such causes as unemployment, illness and declining capacities of ageing members, long-term poverty is the main cause of social exclusion, threatening the ability of families to meet the needs of their members, and ultimately even breaking up and uprooting entire families, with such consequences as the abandonment of children whose parents are no longer able to support them and the major dislocation of populations,

Stressing that long-lasting solutions for the eradication of poverty depend on the social, emotional, spiritual and political maturity of individuals, and that in that area, the family is the first environment in which the values of democracy, social responsibility, tolerance, peace and the respect for human rights are taught and experienced,

Recognizing the principle of shared power and responsibilities among men and women, boys and girls in the family, and expressing the strong feeling that the main burden of poverty imposed on women should be equally shared within the family,

Mindful of the developmental powers of families in the social progress of individuals and communities,

Wish to:

(a) Welcome the United Nations decision to declare 1996 the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty;

(b) Request Governments all over the world to make the eradication of poverty their main objective and to formulate integrated strategies to meet the basic human needs of all, bearing in mind that a more equitable utilization of world resources and the elimination of gaps in the distribution of resources among the world's inhabitants are of critical importance;

(c) Express the hope that, when considering the reduction and elimination of widespread poverty, attention will be given to the fact that the social and economic phenomenon of poverty is particularly complex and dramatic in its effect on families, which should be empowered by having their capacities and self-help potentials increased;

(d) Also express the hope that the family will be considered as an important element of social progress and development-related activities within the United Nations system;

(e) Express the further hope that the Commission for Social Development will maintain the family as an important element in its agenda of work;

(f) Suggest that, as a follow-up to the International Year of the Family, appropriate steps be taken towards the elaboration of a document clearly spelling out the functions, responsibilities and rights of the family, in the spirit of chapter V of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, entitled: "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure".

2. In addition, the above-mentioned non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council wish to manifest their readiness to collaborate with United Nations social progress and development-related activities in the establishment of a partnership at all levels among national and international non-governmental organizations, Governments and other institutions, within the framework of the promotion of self-reliance and community-based initiatives for the eradication of poverty, in which a strengthened family has an important role to play.